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Re-envisioning resurgence: Indigenous pathways to decolonization and sustainable self-determination

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Abstract

Amidst ongoing, contemporary colonialism, this article explores Indigenous pathways to decolonization and resurgence with an emphasis on identifying everyday practices of renewal and responsibility within native communities today. How are decolonization and resurgence interrelated in struggles for Indigenous freedom? By drawing on several comparative examples of resurgence from Cherokees in Kituwah, Lekwungen protection of camas, the Nishnaabekwewag “Water Walkers” movement, and Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) revitalization of kalo, this article provides some insights into contemporary decolonization movements. The politics of distraction is operationalized here as a potential threat to Indigenous homelands, cultures and communities, and the harmful aspects of the rights discourse, reconciliation, and resource extraction are identified, discussed, and countered with Indigenous approaches centered on responsibilities, resurgence and relationships. Overall, findings from this research offer theoretical and applied understandings for regenerating Indigenous nationhood and restoring sustainable relationships with Indigenous homelands.

Keywords: *Indigenous, decolonization, resurgence, renewal, responsibility, politics of distraction*

Introduction

In April 2010, three Mohawks from Kahnawake used their Haudenosaunee passports to travel from Canada to Bolivia as part of a Mohawk delegation to the World People's Conference on Climate Change. Haudenosaunee passports have been used extensively since the 1920's, beginning with Deskaheh, Cayuga Chief and Speaker of the Six Nations Council, who traveled to Geneva, Switzerland, to assert Haudenosaunee self-determination at the League of Nations. International recognition of the Haudenosaunee passport has been contentious at times, as the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom refuse to recognize it as a viable form of identification for travel, and Kanen'tokon Hemlock, Tyler Hemlock and Kahnawiiio Dione's 2010 journey was no different; their planned ten-day trip turned into a 29-day struggle to get back to their homeland ([Horn, 2010](#)).

While the international journey of the Mohawk delegates was tumultuous at best, the questions posed by the Indigenous participants at the Bolivian conference challenged the three Mohawk travelers to the very core of their identities:

“They asked us, ‘So you’re from that region of the world, are you still connected to nature? Is your community and your people still in tuned with the natural world?’” Hemlock said. “We had to honestly tell them, not really, to a degree but not really. So they asked us, ‘What makes you Indigenous?’”

Hemlock said that they explained where Kahnawake was situated and what surrounds us and the close proximity of Montreal. He stated that because of Kahnawake's location that, as a people, we too are struggling to try to maintain our identity and live in a sustainable way.

“So they said, ‘So how do you do it? What’s the example that your community is giving to all the surrounding communities about how to live sustainably with the environment, what are you showing them?’” Hemlock recounted. “Again we had to say, we’re doing our best in a lot of areas, but as a community we really have to ask ourselves that question of what are we doing? When we look at our community and seeing so much land being clear-cut; so many of the swamp and marshlands being land-filled; so many dump-sites. There’s all these things within our own little community and we’re supposed to be the Indigenous examples of living healthy and sustainably with the environment. ([Horn, 2010](#))

While the three Mohawk delegates eventually made it home after a long, hard-fought battle to assert their self-determining authority, the above questions posed to them at the Bolivian conference remained discomfiting. When asked about living sustainably today, Indigenous peoples inevitably confront the ongoing legacies of colonialism that have disrupted their individual and community relationships with the natural world. For example, what happens when the medicines, waters, and traditional foods that Indigenous peoples have relied on for millennia to sustain their communities become contaminated with toxins? What recourse do we have

against those destructive forces and entities that have disconnected us from our longstanding relationships to our homelands, cultures and communities? By addressing the legacies of ongoing, contemporary colonialism, this article explores possible Indigenous pathways to decolonization and resurgence, with an emphasis on identifying some examples of applied decolonizing practices occurring within communities today.

By asking “How will your ancestors and future generations recognize you as Indigenous?” I offer a challenge for us to begin re-envisioning and practicing everyday acts of resurgence. Throughout the article, I engage with similar questions posed by the Indigenous peoples in Bolivia: “What’s the example that your community is giving to all the surrounding communities about how to live sustainably with the environment, what are you showing them?”

Being Indigenous today means struggling to reclaim and regenerate one’s relational, place-based existence by challenging the ongoing, destructive forces of colonization. Whether through ceremony or through other ways that Indigenous peoples (re)connect to the natural world, processes of resurgence are often contentious and reflect the spiritual, cultural, economic, social and political scope of the struggle. As Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred (2009) points out in his extensive study on the psychological and physical impacts of colonialism on Indigenous peoples within a Canadian context, “...colonialism is best conceptualized as an irresistible outcome of a multigenerational and multifaceted process of forced dispossession and attempted acculturation – a disconnection from land, culture, and community – that has resulted in political chaos and social discord within First nations communities and the collective dependency of First Nations upon the state” (p. 52). This disconnection from our lands, cultures and communities has led to social suffering and the destruction of families and yet “...the real deprivation is the erosion of an ethic of universal respect and responsibility that used to be the hallmark of indigenous societies” (Alfred, 2009, p. 43). When considering how colonization systematically deprives us of our experiences and confidence as Indigenous peoples, the linkages between colonialism, cultural harm, and the disintegration of community health and well-being become clearer. Furthermore, this is a spiritual crisis just as much as it is a political, social, and economic one.

Despite Prime Minister Harper’s assertions, that “we” in Canada “have no history of colonialism” (Ljunggren, 2009), contemporary colonialism continues to disrupt Indigenous relationships with their homelands, cultures and communities. One of our biggest enemies is compartmentalization, as shape-shifting colonial entities attempt to sever our relationships to the natural world and define the terrain of struggle. For example, policymakers who frame new government initiatives as “economic development” miss the larger connections embedded within Indigenous economies linking homelands, cultures and communities. By focusing on “everyday” acts of resurgence, one disrupts the colonial physical, social and political boundaries designed to impede our actions to restore our nationhood. In order to live in a responsible way as self-determining nations, Indigenous peoples must confront existing colonial institutions, structures, and policies that attempt to displace us from our homelands and relationships, which impact the

health and well-being of present generations of Indigenous youth and families. Indigenous resurgence means having the courage and imagination to envision life beyond the state.

Decolonization offers different pathways for reconnecting Indigenous nations with their traditional land-based and water-based cultural practices. The decolonization process operates at multiple levels and necessitates moving from an awareness of being in struggle, to actively engaging in everyday practices of resurgence. After all, whether they know it or not (or even want it), every Indigenous person is in a daily struggle for resurgence. It is in these everyday actions where the scope of the struggle for decolonization is reclaimed and re-envisioned by Indigenous peoples. Decolonizing praxis comes from moving beyond political awareness and/or symbolic gestures to everyday practices of resurgence (de Silva, personal communication, 2011)ⁱ. This shift means rejecting the performativity of a rights discourse geared toward state affirmation and recognition, and embracing a daily existence conditioned by place-based cultural practices. How one engages in daily processes of truth-telling and resistance to colonial encroachments is just as important as the overall outcome of these struggles to reclaim, restore, and regenerate homeland relationships. While decolonization and resurgence are often treated separately from each other in scholarly analysis, for the purposes of this article they are viewed as interrelated actions and strategies that inform our pathways to resistance and freedom.

Everyday renewal and community resurgence

Despite yonega (White settler) encroachment onto Indigenous homelands and waterways, our cultures and peoplehood (community) persist (Corntassel & Holm, forthcoming; Holm, Pearson & Chavis, 2003; Corntassel, 2003). A *peoplehood model* provides a useful way of thinking about the nature of everyday resurgence practices both personally and collectively. If one thinks of peoplehood as the interlocking features of language, homeland, ceremonial cycles, and sacred living histories, a disruption to any one of these practices threatens all aspects of everyday life. The complex spiritual, political and social relationships that hold peoplehood together are continuously renewed. These daily acts of renewal, whether through prayer, speaking your language, honoring your ancestors, etc., are the foundations of resurgence. It is through this renewal process that commitments are made to reclaim and restore cultural practices that have been neglected and/or disrupted. As Blackfeet scholar, Leroy Little Bear (2005), states: “A consequence of the idea of renewal is a large number of renewal ceremonies in Native American life-ways. It may be said that Native American history is not a temporal history but a history contained in stories that are told and re-told, in songs that are sung and re-sung, in ceremonies that are performed and re-performed through the seasonal rounds” (p. 10).

Our ceremonies are cyclical, as our stories need to be re-told and acted upon as part of our process of remembering and maintaining balance within our communities. It is the stories that sustain us and ensure our continuity as peoples. The Cherokee story of the first man and woman, Selu and Kanati (Corn Woman and the Hunter), provides important insights into how we should conduct ourselves as Cherokees, including our roles and responsibilities. It is about living

in a state of to'hi, which are peaceful, healthy relationships. By extension, one practices Cherokee governance through gadugi, which is a spirit of community comaraderie where no one person is left alone to climb out of a life endeavour.

Putting gadugi and to'hi into everyday practice brings us back to a key question from the Indigenous peoples in Bolivia, "What's the example that your community is giving to all the surrounding communities about how to live sustainably with the environment, what are you showing them?" One example of renewal and resurgence relates to honoring our responsibilities to atsi'la (fire). Kitoowhagi or Kituwah mound has always been the spiritual and political center for Cherokees. It was the place where the atsi'la galunkw'ti'yu ("the honored or sacred fire") perpetually burned and served as the heart of the nation. Located near the junction of the Oconaluftee and Tuckasegee Rivers in North Carolina, Kituwah was continuously inhabited by Cherokees for over 11,000 years. Each year, Cherokees traveled great distances to Kituwah, bringing ashes from their clan town to add to the mound while taking ashes from Kituwah's sacred fire back to their villages. However, the Cherokee relationship with Kituwah was temporarily disrupted in 1761.

Under orders from General Jeffrey Amherst during the French and Indian War (1754-1763), Colonel James Grant and 2,000 British, Chickasaw, and Catawba soldiers were dispatched to South Carolina in 1761 to "punish" the Cherokees, despite their desire for peaceful relations with the British government. Cherokee Chief Ada-gal'kala had requested peace talks but Grant refused. Within twenty days, Grant and his soldiers destroyed fifteen middle towns, burned over one thousand acres of crops, and forced approximately 5,000 Cherokees to flee into the mountains. During these attacks on Cherokee clan towns, Kituwah mound was razed by Grant's troops. As keeper of the sacred fire, A-ga-yv-la ("Ancient one" or "Old Man of Kituwah") held his ground and attempted to defend Kituwah from British encroachment. In the end, however, A-ga-yv-la was killed; his bravery and love for the land are remembered to this day.

By the time Cherokees had reclaimed Kituwah, they were forcibly removed by the U.S. government in the 1820's. Over time, the destruction of Kituwah continued and Cherokees no longer held the land. By the 1990's, the mound had been reduced to 170 feet in diameter and stood only five feet tall in the middle of a field once used as an airstrip. In 1996, at the urging of Cherokee activists, such as Tom Belt, the Eastern Band of Cherokees purchased the 309 acres containing Kituwah mound for \$3.5 million. Despite yonega encroachment since 1761, Cherokees have maintained their relationship with Kituwah over the years by bringing ashes, dirt, and rocks from their own fireplaces and homes to build it up again. These are the everyday practices of resurgence that don't show up on the news or get much attention and yet they are vital to the sustainability of Indigenous nations. According to Cherokee Elder Benny Smith, "If we follow the teachings of Kituwah, there will be a return to it."

In 2009, Duke Energy began bulldozing a mountain directly overlooking Kituwah, and was planning to build a large power sub-station in the area, which was viewed by Cherokees as a desecration of this sacred place. The leadership of the Eastern Band of Cherokees, along with

support from the Cherokee Nation and United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians, strongly opposed the Duke Energy project and joined an alliance with other area residents to form “Citizens to Protect Kituwah Valley.” With the resulting press uncovering Duke Energy’s failure to follow proper procedures in the construction of the sub-station along with the threat of a lawsuit, Duke Energy ceased all construction near Kituwah mound in autumn 2010 (Thornton, 2011). These actions have mobilized Cherokees to honor their responsibilities to protect Kituwah and it has also led to daily acts of resurgence around this sacred place, whether by bringing ash and rocks to build up the mound again, or by practicing ceremonies on it again. To paraphrase Benny Smith, there has been a return to Kituwah through everyday acts of resurgence. These everyday acts of renewal are needed to combat the main barriers to resurgence: intimidation, co-optation, and the politics of distraction, which will be discussed in the following section.

Operationalizing the politics of distraction

The ‘politics of distraction’ (Hingagaroa, 2000) diverts our energy and attention away from community resurgence and “frames community relationships in state-centric terms” (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005, p. 600). These are the tools of shape-shifting colonial entities to separate us from our homelands, cultures, and communities. Nuu-chah-nulth scholar, Umeek (E. Richard Atleo), discusses how his nation counters the politics of distraction through ceremony:

A central ceremony of *hahuulism* involves periodically, publicly, and reverently acknowledging that humans are characterized by short-term memory. Humans have a tendency to forget; they are easily distracted. Humans have a tendency to prefer the “quick fix.”...The ancient Nuu-chah-nulth guarded against falling into such times with a periodic remembrance ceremony called a *uuk*aana*, which means ‘we remember reality.’ (2011, p. 164)

Within a colonial context, acts of remembrance are resurgence. As I see it, there are three main themes that are commonly invoked by colonial entities to divert attention away from deep decolonizing movements and push us towards a state agenda of co-optation and assimilation. The politics of distraction are manifested in three distinct ways:

- Rights;
- Reconciliation; and
- Resources.

I will examine each of these themes and their responses in order to uncover some deeper strategies for overcoming the politics of distraction. For example, rather than focus on the rights discourse, our energies should be directed where the real power lies: our inherent *responsibilities*. Additionally, processes of reconciliation are merely reinscribing the status quo; counter to reconciliation, *resurgence* takes the emphasis away from state frameworks of “forgive

and forget” back to re-localized, community-centered actions premised on reconnecting with land, culture and community. Finally, the word resource is a way of commodifying and marketizing Indigenous homelands; in contrast, Indigenous peoples view their homelands and communities as a complex web of *relationships*.

From rights to responsibilities

When addressing contemporary shape-shifting colonialism, the rights discourse can only take struggles for Indigenous decolonization and resurgence so far. Indigenous mobilization strategies that invoke existing human rights norms, which are premised on state *recognition* of Indigenous self-determination, will not lead to a sustainable self-determination process that restores and regenerates Indigenous nations. According to Dene political theorist Glen Coulthard (2007), “the politics of recognition in its contemporary form promises to reproduce the very configurations of colonial power that Indigenous peoples’ demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend” (p. 437). By embedding themselves within the state-centric rights discourse, “Indigenous nations run the risk of seeking political and/or economic solutions to contemporary challenges that require sustainable, spiritual foundations” (Corntassel, 2008, p. 115-116).

Furthermore, by mobilizing around a rights discourse, there is a danger of buying into an “illusion of inclusion” being promoted by state-centered forums: “Consequently, a system that once denied an Indigenous rights agenda now embraces it and channels the energies of transnational Indigenous networks into the institutional fiefdoms of member countries” (Corntassel, 2007, p. 161). Article 46, part 1 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is telling in this regard: “Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, people, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act contrary to the Charter of the United Nations or construed as authorizing or encouraging any action which would dismember or impair, totally or in part, the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent States.” While Indigenous peoples do not tend to seek secession from the state, the restoration of their land-based and water-based cultural relationships and practices is often portrayed as a threat to the territorial integrity of the country(ies) in which they reside, and thus, a threat to state sovereignty. The politics of recognition highlights the shortcomings of pursuing rights-based strategies for Indigenous peoples desiring decolonization and restoration of their relationships with the natural world.

As I reference in the article above (Corntassel, 2007), rights are derived from state-centric forums while Indigenous nations’ responsibilities to the natural world originate from their long-standing relationships with their homelands – relationships that have existed long before the development of the state system. Rights, on the other hand, are re-gifted rhetoric from artificial states. As Indigenous peoples we act on our enduring, inherent responsibilities. While there has been limited success in advancing claims of Indigenous cultural harm/injury in global forums and judicial bodies, such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, as of this writing

no global forum has yet held Canada accountable to standards related to land-based and water-based cultural practices, homeland reclamation, and subsistence.

Given that a state-centered rights discourse has limits in terms of addressing questions of Indigenous recovery and community resurgence, a responsibility-based ethic grounded in relationships to homelands and community knows no limits. Our ancestors and future generations will recognize us as Indigenous by how we act on these responsibilities. For example, Cheryl Bryce and her family have been managing their traditional Lekwungen territories for centuries and Cheryl continues to harvest kwetlal (camas, a starchy bulb that has been a staple food and trade item for Indigenous peoples in the region for generations) on park lands and private properties, despite threats to her and her family's well-being from settlers attempting to deny her access to Lekwungen homelands (Penn, 2006). The rights discourse does little to assist in Cheryl's everyday acts of resurgence on her family territory. Political/legal rights-based approaches do not offer meaningful restoration of Indigenous homelands and food sovereignty. Nor do they address the urgency of the struggle - the revitalization of traditional foods, as well as community roles and responsibilities, is critical to the future survival and regeneration of Lekwungen peoples. A community's cultural continuity is premised on direct actions to protect these sacred relationships.

Cheryl, her family, and the community youth have been working on their territory to remove invasive species as well as harvest and traditionally pit cook the kwetlal. However, invasive species removal undertaken in Lekwungen takes place on "public park lands", such as Meegan (a.k.a. Beacon Hill Park), and is prone to challenges by authorities and local citizens over competing jurisdictional claims. In order to recruit more assistance for her efforts, Cheryl founded a "Community Tool Shed" in 2011 to establish a network of students and interested residents to work together towards reinstating traditional food systems. There is a strong educational component to this work, as Cheryl has developed maps of Victoria with traditional place namesⁱⁱ and has also spoken to several school groups and residents about the history of the region as well as their obligations to the kwetlal food systems in Lekwungen territories. According to Cheryl, "The Garry Oak Ecosystem is a living artifact of my ancestors. The Lekwungen people will continue to harvest and pit cook kwetlal for many years to come. Its importance is vital to our history, traditions and future generations" (Bryce, personal communication, 2011).

From reconciliation to resurgence

Reconciliation without meaningful restitution merely reinscribes the status quo without holding anyone accountable for ongoing injustices. At its core, reconciliation has a religious connotation premised on restoring one's relationship with God. In fact, most Indigenous nations don't have words for reconciliation in their languages, which is the truest test of its lack of relevance to communities. When put into practice, whether through a truth and reconciliation commission or another forum (in Canada, for example, the B.C. Treaty Process as well as in the proposed "New Relationship" legislation utilize this terminology), reconciliation in practice tends "...to relegate

all committed injustices to the past while attempting to legitimate the status quo” (Corntassel, et al, 2009, p. 145). As Taiaiake Alfred (2005) points out, “The logic of reconciliation as justice is clear: without massive restitution, including land, financial transfers and other forms of assistance to compensate for past harms and continuing injustices committed against our peoples, reconciliation would permanently enshrine colonial injustices and is itself a further injustice” (p. 152). The permanence of these injustices becomes more apparent as the language of reconciliation is used to promote “certainty” of land title, which in turn attracts more foreign direct investment opportunities. Given an overwhelming desire to secure a stable land base to promote more corporate investment, the Government of Canada, as well as certain provinces, including British Columbia, have begun to use the language of reconciliation in negotiations with Indigenous peoples (for example, the B.C. Treaty Process) to establish the “certainty” of a land claim in such a way as to facilitate the extinguishment of original Indigenous title to the land (Alfred, 2005; Blackburn, 2005).

An alternative to state-centered processes that prioritize the legitimization of settler occupation of Indigenous homelands is community-centered resurgence. As Taiaiake Alfred (2005) points out, “resurgence and regeneration constitute a way to power-surge against the empire with integrity” (p. 24). This is how we move beyond political awareness to on-the-ground actions to defend our homelands. An example of community resurgence in action is the “Water Walkers” movement in Wikiwemikong Unceded First Nation in Ontario, Canada. The Water Walkers began in the winter of 2002 in response to increasing threats of environmental pollution to their community lakes and traditional waters. According to one of the leaders of this movement, Josephine Mandamin, they asked themselves, “What can we do to bring out, to tell people of our responsibilities as women, as keepers of life and the water, to respect our bodies as Nishnaabe-kwewag, as women?” (Bédard, 2008, p. 103). They decided as a group to undertake a spiritual walk around the entire perimeter of Lake Superior with buckets of water to raise awareness of the need to protect water. According to Josephine, “This journey with the pail of water that we carry is our way of Walking the Talk...Our great grandchildren and the next generation will be able to say, yes, our grandmothers and grandfathers kept this water for us!!” (Bédard, 2008, p. 104). Our commitment to our relationships means engaging in continuous cycles of renewal that are transmitted to future generations. These are the new stories of resistance and resurgence that compel us to remember our spiritual and political principles and values and act on them. By renewing our roles and responsibilities everyday, future generations will recognize us as Indigenous defenders of our lands, cultures, and communities.

From resources to relationships

To begin, it is important to understand environmental scholar and activist Vandana Shiva’s (2005) identification of three economies at work in the world today: 1) the dominant free market economy; 2) nature’s economy (ecological system, including water, soil etc.); 3) and the sustenance economy (“women’s economy” where “people work to directly provide the conditions necessary to maintain their lives”) (p. 14-17). The dominant economy cannot exist

without the other two and yet the sustenance economy and nature's economy have been exploited to the point of depletion. Unfortunately, colonization and the false premise that there are no legitimate alternatives to the market system serve to weaken the confidence of Indigenous people and challenge one's ability to imagine anything other than economic development as a viable pathway to resurgence. Under the guise of a "green economy" or "sustainable development", corporations and other colonial entities are "...in violation of natural hahuulic law" (Umeek 2011, p. 167). According to Umeek (2011), "For corporations, the creation of wealth has become a purpose in and of itself rather than a fulfillment of hahuulic law's requirement for the well-being of family and community, which includes all life forms on planet earth" (p. 167).

When market transactions replace kinship relationships, Indigenous homelands and waterways become very vulnerable to exploitation by shape-shifting colonial powers. State construction of citizenship is one way the politics of distraction takes shape in Indigenous communities. Altamirano-Jiménez (2004) examines the implications of the market system on Indigenous peoples and finds that demands for Indigenous citizenship in Canada and Mexico are driven by neoliberal policies "which tends to separate territory from self-government and questions the place of land/territory/property in the constitution of citizenship and citizenship rights."ⁱⁱⁱ In a globalization context, social citizenship is being displaced by "market citizenship" (p. 351). Consequently, as Altamirano-Jiménez (2004) points out, "Canadian citizenship for Aboriginal peoples often simply means the restriction of their treaty rights for the sake of formal equality with other Canadian citizens. Equality, under these circumstances, implies the transformation of communal land/territory into civil rights/individual property" (p. 352). In Mexico and Canada, a common trend emerges:

It is a market citizenship that encourages, forces or induces individuals to enter new relations with global networks where economic criteria and market incentives are predominant. Indigenous peoples are encouraged to throw away the yoke of internal colonialism by becoming successful entrepreneurs in the global economy. (Altamirano-Jiménez, 2004, p. 354)

Altamirano-Jiménez' case studies of the Mackenzie Valley pipeline in Canada and the Puebla Panama Plan in Mexico illustrate colonialism's effects on citizenship constructions. Given that we're currently confronting "...manipulations by shape-shifting colonial powers" and that "the instruments of domination are evolving and inventing new methods to erase Indigenous histories and senses of place" (Corntassel & Alfred, 2005, p. 601), one should be wary of any citizenship models grounded in capitalism/neoliberalism to the exclusion of responsibility-based governance. Rather than emulating Western institutions and nation-building models, the top priority for responsibility-based communities should be to revitalize local Indigenous economies where "markets are subservient to a subsistence paradigm and welfare of the people" (Phillips, 2006, p. 535).

As a refutation to a resource extraction-based economy, Indigenous peoples practice and honor their sustainable relationships. A Cherokee word that describes a sustainable relationship is *digadatsele'i* or “we belong to each other”. Belonging to each other in the broadest sense means that we are accountable and responsible to each other and the natural world. This is also evidenced by the Kanaka Maoli's (Native Hawaiian) relationship to *Kalo* in Hawai'i.

Kalo (taro) is a sacred plant and is considered an elder sibling to the Kanaka Maoli people. Prior to European invasion, *lo'i kalo* fields covered at least 20,000 acres (90 square kilometres) over six islands in the Hawaiian archipelago. Today, after more than 100 years of U.S. occupation, less than 400 acres (1.6 square kilometers) of *lo'i kalo* remain (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, 2009). Recently, the Hālau Kū Māna (HKM) public charter school students and teachers began rebuilding the 'auwai and *lo'i* at 'Aihulama, which is the first time it had been functioning in more than a century. As Goodyear-Ka'ōpua (2009) points out, “the project of rebuilding 'auwai and *lo'i* at 'Aihualama can be seen as part of a larger effort to rebuild indigenous Hawaiian agricultural and educational systems” (p. 61).

Since their first taro planting under the full moon in 2006, “students in Papa Lo'i have opened approximately one new field per year, and learned and practiced all phases from putting *huli* in the ground to putting 'ai (food, especially pounded *kalo*) in people's mouths” (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, 2009, p. 64). When I was invited, along with other Indigenous Governance faculty and students from the University of Victoria, to visit the *lo'i kalo* in 2010, we had several opportunities to work alongside the HKM students at 'Aihualama and they talked about how much they have learned about their responsibilities to the land/waterways as well as Kanaka Maoli food security from their semester work in the *lo'i kalo*. For several of these youth and participants, this was a transformative experience but it was also something deeper. It was the regeneration of sustainable Hawaiian technologies by putting them back into everyday practice. Furthermore, distinctions between education and cultural practice were blurred. Several of the *kumu* and students also spoke about their *kuleana* to the *lo'i*, which roughly translates into responsibility, sphere of authority and family.^{iv} Goodyear-Ka'ōpua (2009) discusses the significance of rebuilding of 'auwai and *lo'i kalo* (wetland taro field) as going beyond viewing the 'auwai as a “material technology” but “...also as a form of indigenous Hawaiian theory, with its basis in the ancestral, landed practices of Kanaka Maoli” (p. 49). In the “strategies and non-negotiables” section of her paper, Goodyear-Ka'ōpua outlines four goals that express Kanaka Maoli relationships to 'Āina (land): 'Āina is paramount; water is essential to life; regular and consistent protocols; and Lo'i teaches us work ethics (p. 69). This is where everyday practices get reaffirmed as Kanaka Maoli act on their *kuleana* to the land and water, as well as to their relatives.

Overall, the rights discourse has serious limitations in terms of its potential as a remedial form of justice. Similarly, reconciliation is framed according to the logic of legitimating state authority rather than offering meaningful restitution for harms committed against Indigenous communities and homelands. Finally, treating the natural world as a resource for extraction

destroys the sustenance and nature's economies, while commodifying and marketizing Indigenous relationships, responsibilities, and resurgence efforts.

Everyday decolonization and resurgence practices

If colonization is a disconnecting force, then resurgence is about reconnecting with homelands, cultures, and communities. Both decolonization and resurgence facilitate a renewal of our roles and responsibilities as Indigenous peoples to the sustainable praxis of Indigenous livelihoods, food security, community governance, and relationships to the natural world and ceremonial life that enables the transmission of these cultural practices to future generations (Corntassel, 2008). It is basically the implementation of digadadtse'i as communities mobilize for a spiritual revolution. According to Alfred (2009), a process of Indigenous regeneration includes collective community efforts to achieve the following four objectives:

1. The restoration of indigenous presence(s) on the land and the revitalization of land-based practices;
2. An increased reliance on traditional diet(s) among Indigenous people;
3. The transmission of indigenous culture, spiritual teachings and knowledge of the land between Elders and youth;
4. The strengthening of familial activities and re-emergence of indigenous cultural and social institutions as governing authorities within First Nations; and,
5. Short-term and long-term initiatives and improvements in sustainable land-based economies as the primary economies of reserve based First Nations communities and as supplemental economies for urban indigenous communities. (p. 56)

While the above-listed indicators of cultural regeneration offer several promising pathways to community resurgence, the adequacy of these measures will vary from community to community. As Nishnaabekwe scholar Leanne Simpson points out, "Indigenous Knowledge is critical for resurgence" (Simpson, 2009, p. 75). She outlines a four-part strategy designed to transcend the politics of distraction and keep the focus on the revitalization of Indigenous communities:

1. Confront "funding" mentality – It is time to admit that colonizing governments and private corporations are not going to fund our decolonization;
2. Confronting linguistic genocide – There is little recognition or glory attached to it, but without it, we will lose ourselves;
3. Visioning resurgence – The importance of visioning and dreaming a better future based on our own Indigenous traditions cannot be underestimated;
4. The need to awaken ancient treaty and diplomatic mechanisms – Renewing our pre-colonial treaty relationships with contemporary neighbouring Indigenous Nations

promotes decolonization and peaceful co-existence, and it builds solidarity among Indigenous Nations. (Simpson, 2008, pp. 77-84)

As Simpson's work highlights, everyday acts of resurgence aren't glamorous or expedient. It might involve a personal vow to only eat food that has been hunted, fished or grown by Indigenous peoples, and/or speaking one's language to family members or in social media groups, or even growing traditional foods in your own backyard. For example, I recently requested seeds from the Cherokee Nation Heirloom Seed Project, including rare types of corn and centuries-old strains of tobacco, in order to revitalize ceremonies and traditional foods, while also producing more seeds for future Cherokees. This is small-scale, initial effort that might work toward regenerating the old trade networks between Indigenous communities as well as building healthy relationships by increasing food security and family well-being. Overall, one sees that grassroots efforts like the ones referenced above don't rely heavily on rights as much as community responsibilities to protect traditional homelands and food systems. By resisting colonial authority and demarcating their homelands via place naming and traditional management practices, these everyday acts of resurgence have promoted the regeneration of sustainable food systems in community and are transmitting these teachings and values to future generations.

There is also an educational component to the struggle for resurgence. Lekwungen activist, Cheryl Bryce, who was mentioned earlier, creates teachable moments in order to convey the history and contemporary struggles of the Indigenous peoples in the region. For example, Cheryl makes bouquets out of cut-outs of kwetlal (camas) flowers, along with cedar and other native plants, and brings them to Parliament in order to remind people of the local battles being waged over the land, as well as honouring the ancestors, women and children who continue to defend the land. Cheryl also brings wreaths to places where extensive development and destruction of her community's homelands has occurred. In one instance, she created a big bouquet made entirely from invasive species and delivered it to City Hall in Langford. Upon entering City Hall, she was greeted by police officers. Cheryl informed the public officials present that the invasive species bouquet represented all of them in the room and that they were sick because of what they were doing to Indigenous homelands, cultures and the futures of Indigenous people. She uses these forms of what I would call "insurgent education" to make settlers uncomfortable and to urge people to practice healthier relationships so that the land itself can also heal.

The role of mentorships and apprenticeships is crucial to initiating a process of community regeneration that takes Indigenous peoples beyond performance and into the realm of everyday practice. Change of this magnitude tends to happen in small increments, "one warrior at a time" (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005, p. 613). Elders and teachers will need to ready themselves for the renewed responsibilities of assisting others in their reconnections to land, culture and community. According to Alfred (2009), "Measurable change on levels beyond the individual will emanate from the start made by physical and psychological transformations in people

generated through direct, guided experiences in small, personal groups and one-on-one mentoring” (p. 56).

These are changes that also begin within families by embracing the practice of digadatsele’i. As Alfred (2011, personal communication) points out, “Our children should have the opportunity to live more Indigenous lives than we do.”^v By understanding the overlapping and simultaneous processes of decolonization and resurgence, we begin to better understand how to implement meaningful and substantive community decolonization practices. Future generations will map their own pathways to community resurgence, ideally on their own terms. Through our everyday acts of resurgence, our ancestors along with future generations will recognize us as Indigenous to the land. And this is how our homelands will recognize us as being Indigenous to that place.

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ⁱ Kahikina de Silva, “Pathways to Decolonization” class session, Indigenous Governance Program course *IGOV 595: Reclaiming Ūelānen: Land, Water, Governance*, University of Victoria, July 19, 2011. This quote is used with Kahikina’s written permission.

ⁱⁱ See, for example, <http://bcheritage.ca/salish/ph2/map/lekwungen.htm>

ⁱⁱⁱ For a broader examination of the impacts of neoliberalism on Indigenous citizenship in Latin American, see Yashar (2005).

^{iv} Special thanks to kumus Noenoe Silva and Leilani Basham for explaining the concept of kuleana to me.

^v Taiaiake Alfred, “Pathways to Decolonization” class session, Indigenous Governance Program course *IGOV 595: Reclaiming Ūelānen: Land, Water, Governance*, University of Victoria, July 19, 2011. This quote is used with Taiaiake’s written permission.